

Saskatchewan Human Services

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Other booklets in the
information sharing and
agency projects.

Working with communities

Booklets on community
it, coordinated case
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developed

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Human Services Handbook Series

Working with Communities is part of a series of booklets that together comprise the Human Services Handbook Series. Other booklets in the series include:

- *Saskatchewan Human Services: Working Together;*
- *Sharing Information to Improve Services for Children, Youth and Families;*
- *Interagency Projects: An Evaluation Guide;* and,
- *Integrated Case Management.*

The plan is to continue to expand the series as needs are identified by human service providers in working collaboratively among themselves and with communities. You are welcome to copy and distribute this booklet and others in the Human Services Handbook Series.

Comments and requests for information and copies of the booklets can be sent to:

ADMs' Forum on Service Integration
c/o Saskatchewan Education
2220 College Ave. – 7th Floor
REGINA, SK S4P 3V7
www.sasked.gov.sk.ca

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- the Interdepartmental Community Development Committee;
- Saskatchewan Council on Community Development; and,
- Community Development Society of Saskatchewan.

Working with Communities was developed in response to requests for support from human service providers throughout the province. It draws on the experience of these people and we are indebted to them for their longstanding commitment and leadership in interagency collaboration and public involvement. *Working with Communities* also draws extensively on the literature in the field. A list of references is available in Appendix A.

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Introduction: Working with Communities

Across Saskatchewan social workers, educators, health, justice and community workers, and other human service providers are exploring new ways of working with their clients, communities, and with one another. Their aim is to enhance the effectiveness of the services they provide by engaging the people they serve in identifying needs and solutions. As well, by working collaboratively with one another, they are seeking to provide services that are more coordinated and integrated.

Public involvement, community development, and interagency collaboration (integrated services) are processes used to create more effective working relationships among human service providers and Saskatchewan people. The benefits of working this way include:

- enabling development and delivery of more appropriate, holistic and responsive services and programs;
- making better use of community knowledge and resources, honouring community wisdom, and enhancing the capacity of communities to plan and make decisions about their own futures; and,
- fostering shared ownership of issues and responsibility for solutions.

This booklet, *Working with Communities*, responds to requests for information and support from human service providers across the province. It will be helpful to Saskatchewan government employees, community boards and staff, such as health boards and school boards, regional college staff, and community workers and volunteers. It provides guiding principles and practical suggestions for various types of community work.

Working effectively with communities and community members is not a simple matter of acquiring tools and techniques. It requires thoughtful practice and attention to personal ethics and attitudes, as well as reflection on and adoption of principles of cooperation and collaboration.

Commitment to Working with Communities

In recent years the Government of Saskatchewan has undertaken a number of key initiatives that encourage closer and more effective working relationships with communities. These initiatives aim to address the social and economic challenges facing communities and families, and to manage change. **Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children, the Integrated School-Linked Services Initiative, Health Renewal, the Aboriginal Policy Framework, and the Assistant/Associate Deputy Ministers' (ADMs') Forum on Human Services** are examples of activities that focus on meeting the needs of Saskatchewan people more effectively through the use of collaborative and inclusive approaches.

These major initiatives share aims and strategies for strengthening the involvement of communities and the effectiveness of service delivery in Saskatchewan.

Shared Aims:

- A comprehensive range of responsive and integrated programs and services for vulnerable children and families.
- Saskatchewan people and communities with the ability to actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives and to shape their own futures.

Shared Strategies:

- *Public Involvement* – community and/or consumer participation, cooperation and collaboration in the planning and delivery of programs and services.
- *Community Development* – capacity building and empowerment.
- *Interagency Collaboration* – interagency planning, coordinated and integrated service delivery.

Provincial government departments and agencies have different relationships and formal structures to work with their stakeholders and those in the field who will influence, to varying degrees, how they work with community. For example:

- Some departments, such as Education; Health; and Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing (MACH) have devolved responsibility and authority for program and service delivery to local autonomous boards, such as boards of education, health boards and municipal councils. As well, MACH has devolved responsibilities and authority to provincial organizations that work with a range of community-based institutions and agencies.
- Social Services has community-based staff and works with a range of funded community-based organizations that provide a range of services such as daycare, counselling, family services and crisis intervention.
- Justice carries out its mandate through a regional delivery structure, through programs delivered at the community level and through partnerships with the RCMP, municipal police forces and community based organizations.

- Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training is developing a regional delivery structure with the creation of 20 Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services Offices. These Career and Employment Services Offices maintain links with Regional Colleges, Post-Secondary Institutions, community-based organizations and the federal government in the delivery of programs and services.

Nine Regional Intersectoral Committees (RICs) have been established province-wide by the ADMs' Forum. These committees include government departments and other partner sectors such as health districts, school divisions, regional colleges, SIAST Campuses, tribal councils and housing authorities. The RICs and their Coordinators work to identify and remove barriers to service integration and enhance the delivery of resources and services at the community and regional levels. The RICs play a key role in the approval process for a number of provincial funding programs that emphasize community involvement, such as the Prevention and Support Grants and the Associated Entities Fund. This helps to ensure that grant monies are directed toward regional priorities and put to the best possible use.

Guiding Principles

The following principles guide cooperative and collaborative efforts:

1. Respect for the Worth of Each Person and the Diversity of People – Equity

Because we believe in the inherent value and worth of each person, we respect and nurture the diversity, cultural heritage, life experience, ways of knowing, unique potential and capabilities of each person. People have access to the necessary supports to address their needs and to achieve their potential. A respectful, barrier-free environment is fostered, where individuals have opportunities for equal access and equal benefit.

2. Community Empowerment

Because we believe in community empowerment, communities are acknowledged as diverse and unique, each with its own strengths, history, needs and vision. People in communities are seen to be in the best position to understand local issues and to create solutions based upon their strengths and resources. Inclusive approaches seek and respect community knowledge, wisdom and direction. They foster hope for the future and self-reliance in achieving a high quality of community life.

3. Cooperation and Shared Responsibility

Because we believe that by working together people can change the conditions affecting their lives that may be beyond their individual control, we use inclusive and collaborative processes and foster a commitment to the "common good". As well, we nurture a sense of shared ownership for problems or issues, and shared responsibility for solutions.

4. Holistic and Integrated Approaches

Because we believe in the interdependent nature of issues and solutions, we address issues by defining and dealing with them as a whole, rather than as parts. It is understood that issues are complex and multi-faceted and that solutions are interconnected, requiring coordinated and integrated responses.

5. Prevention

*Because we believe in the importance of prevention, solution-finding focuses on identifying root causes of problems, not simply addressing symptoms. Whenever possible, supports are provided **before** problems reach the point where major interventions are needed.*

6. Openness and Honesty

Because we believe in openness and honesty, human service providers, agencies and community members strive to ensure that our values and directions are clearly understood. We share with one another accurate and necessary information so that all involved can make informed decisions. As well, confidentiality is upheld.

7. Affordability and Accountability

Because we believe in affordability and accountability, initiatives make the best use of resources and encourage resource sharing and reallocation to address shared priorities. As well, initiatives are continually assessed as to their effectiveness in meeting shared objectives.

Understanding Community

A community is a group of people bound together through mutual interests and a sense of shared destiny. Community is often defined geographically, as a town, rural area, or neighbourhood. It can also be defined as a community of interest – such as a seniors' community or an arts community. Generally, communities are self-defining. A person can belong to several communities at one time.

Some common characteristics of communities include:

- a shared commitment to a vision, values, mutual interest, culture, identity or common good;
- interdependency; and,
- personal relationships.

Although communities share values, this does not mean that all members agree or that these values are unchanging. In fact, recognition and acceptance of diversity are critical values for effective communities. As well, communities are dynamic, influenced by their own members and by external events and other people.

The Role of the Human Service Provider in Working with Communities

Working effectively with community members and groups presents both challenges and opportunities for social workers, educators, health, justice and community workers, and other human service providers. It involves stretching how we think about and do our work. It requires an examination of personal values and beliefs about the strengths of a community relative to our role as professionals. It often requires the development of new knowledge and skills.

In working effectively with communities, you will want to:

- **Reflect on Who You Are in Relation to Others**

The first step in working well with communities is understanding what you bring to bear on the relationship. For example:

- *Why are you interested in doing this?*
- *What are your goals or objectives? What do you hope to achieve?*
- *What do you feel and believe to be true about the community you will be working with?*
- *What strengths do you bring?*
- *What are your constraints?*

- **Be Open to Changing Roles**

In working with communities, the role of the human service provider or public administrator may change. It may include:

- *coordinating and brokering of programs or services as well as delivering them;*
- *facilitating, collaborating and empowering as well as leading and directing;*
- *advising as well as instructing;*
- *listening as well as telling;*
- *innovating as well as implementing; and,*
- *negotiating, mediating and facilitating as well as prescribing.*

- **Continually Develop and Expand Your Knowledge and Skills**

The knowledge and skills required for this expanded role include strengths in communication – listening, hearing and speaking with a diverse range of people; team participation and team building; leadership identification and development; collaboration; networking; consensus building; negotiating, problem solving and conflict resolution; group and process facilitation; and so on.

- **Recognize and Resolve Multiple Accountabilities**

Human service providers who work with community members are often faced with multiple accountabilities. Are you accountable to your department or agency first, or to the community first? This is not always an easy question to answer and the answer may vary depending on the circumstances and the issue at hand. Ethical guidelines, agreed upon expectations and a professional focus can assist in resolving this question.

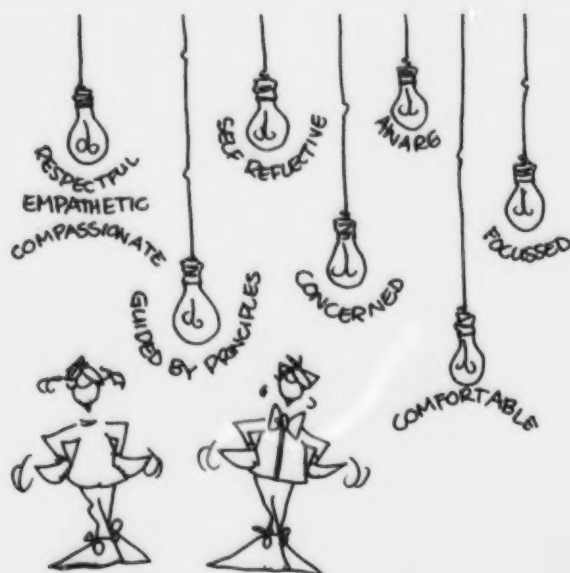
- **Build Mutual Trust**

Mutual trust is the foundation for working in partnership with other people and communities. Trust, however, cannot be forced or insisted upon. It is built over time.

Some General Guidelines for Working with Communities

As human service providers interested in public involvement and community development, we strive to be:

- respectful, empathetic and compassionate;
- guided by principles in our actions;
- self-reflective about our own ideas and practices;
- concerned about justice and fairness;
- aware of relationships and trends in society;
- comfortable with ambiguities;
- concerned with both processes and outcomes; and,
- focussed on both relationship building and tasks.



Processes for Working with Communities

In working with communities, **public involvement** refers to efforts human service providers make to include community members in planning and problem-solving. **Community development** goes beyond public involvement and is an educational and motivational process that works intentionally to enhance community capacity and resources, and to address issues and imbalances. **Interagency collaboration** is a new way of working together, bringing people and organizations together around a shared concern.

Choosing how you will work with a community will depend on a number of factors:

- the subject or issue at hand and its complexity;
- the community's needs and interests and its willingness and capacity to participate; and,
- the need for building shared understanding and general acceptance of a solution or new direction.

Whenever possible, the decision on the approach to take with a community should be made with the input of both human service workers and the community.

Public Involvement

Public involvement is an inclusive process where human service providers and agencies engage people and communities in meaningful ways to identify needs and analyze problems, determine solutions, plan for the future, deliver services, and evaluate progress.

People are engaged in cooperative or collaborative relationships, depending on the levels of shared decision-making and commitment that are established. **The form of public involvement being described and promoted here is qualitatively different than the traditional consultative approach.** People are involved earlier and more extensively in the process to define problems, propose solutions, make decisions, share resources, and share responsibility for outcomes. In a traditional consultative approach, an issue is presented with possible solutions and people are asked for their opinion. Decision-making remains centralized.

Objectives

The objectives for involving community members are to:

- develop and deliver effective and responsive policies, programs and services that are community-based;
- empower Saskatchewan people and communities to influence or participate in decisions that affect their lives and shape their futures;
- build capacity for self-sufficiency and shared responsibility; and,
- foster a spirit of cooperation among human service providers, community members and communities.

Levels of Public Involvement

There are a number of different ways that human service providers can involve community members. The focus of public involvement discussed in this booklet is partnership. All of the different approaches, however, have merit depending on what you hope to achieve. To set partnerships within the context of the many possible types of public involvement, a continuum is presented on the following pages that organizes public involvement strategies into seven categories. Each of the seven categories along the continuum depicts an increased level of involvement and responsibility, including:

1. **Direction** – You are sure of the direction you want to take based on research, mandate, government policy or regulation, and are driving/delivering a message or plan to community members or the general public.
 2. **Education** – You are using information and instruction to change attitudes, enhance skill development and ensure informed decisions within communities without raising expectations of participation in the planning process.
 3. **Information/Feedback** – You provide information to community members and groups to create awareness of an issue or program and/or to request feedback from them on a predetermined program, plan or policy.
 4. **Consultation** – There is formal dialogue between you and community members to achieve a common understanding of an issue or policy and/or to seek solutions and advice.
 5. **Partnerships** – This can take the form of *cooperation* or *full collaboration* with different levels of shared planning, responsibility and decision making between you and community members.
- (Note: Establishing partnerships of either a cooperative or collaborative nature is the focus of the community work promoted in this booklet.)*
6. **Delegation** – You transfer responsibility, normally exercised by yourself or your agency, to community members and groups. You still retain overall authority and can transfer responsibility back if required.
 7. **Self-Determination/Devolution** – The agency/government with authority transfers responsibility and authority to community (another level of government, community board, or organization).

	Direction	Education	Partnership: (cooperation/ collaboration)		
What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect • Control • Direct • Prescribe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed decision-making • Attitude change • Skill development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General awareness • Informal dialogue • Government decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal dialogue • Informal dialogue • Government decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared planning and decisions • Shared defining of problems and possible solutions • Shared resources • Shared evaluation
Why	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgency • Safety/well-being • Lack of alternative • Need for leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New direction • Issue complexity • Show more than one side of an issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy/program development • Provide detail • Need for shared understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade-offs required • Critical supply/demand imbalance • Multiple interests • Acquire public perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complexity • Empowerment • Conflict • Ongoing multiple inputs • Better responses and results • Accountability • Public demand
How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Regulation • Law • Program criteria • Incentives • Disincentives • Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media campaign • Reports • Public presentations • Seminars • Brochures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media campaign papers • Public meetings • Surveys • Workshops • Focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory boards and committees • Public hearings • Royal Commissions • Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering committees • Planning groups • Co-management • Broad strategic alliances • Formal agreements
	Knowing About the Decision	Being Heard Before the Decision	Having an Influence on the Decision	Taking Responsibility and/or Authority for the Decision and Outcome	

Community Development

Community development is an educational and motivational process that engages and empowers people in communities to actively participate in guiding their social and economic affairs (*Government of Saskatchewan, 1993*). It helps to create safe, stable and healthy communities where people participate in improving their quality of life. Community development is about building democracy, in a participatory and long-lasting way. This includes creating or supporting communities and their organizations and nurturing the ability of the community to lead itself. There is an emphasis on ensuring the participation of those people and groups who are too often left out.

Objectives

The objectives of community development are to:

- develop community leadership and strong community groups;
- stimulate and support people to cooperative action and shared decision-making regarding their needs and preferred solutions, maximizing their opportunities to enhance the quality of their lives; and,
- achieve economic, social and environmental sustainability and viability of communities.

A clearer understanding of community development can be gained by comparing it to a traditional approach where services and supports are provided "top-down".

Community Development Process

1. Determining Readiness

Is the group or community ready for development? To assess readiness you will want to answer a number of key questions, including:

- What is the level of interest in and awareness of the issues?
- Is there a desire to resolve the issues?
- Is there leadership for the issue in the community?
- What is the history and context of the community in relation to the issues?
- What is the possibility of creating a critical mass for change?

Where there is greater readiness, there will be greater opportunity for successful community development.

2. Animating the Community

In animating a community you bring "life" to the issue or initiative at hand by:

- identifying and encouraging key people and groups to get involved, including those people who don't usually become involved. Concerted efforts will be required to remove barriers to participation, such as the need for transportation and childcare. A variety of techniques including outreach and follow-up will need to be used. People who are not confident that they are going to be listened to usually do not respond to a written invitation. Personal contact and relationship building are critical.
- creating an environment for informed and democratic decision making by the community. To make informed decisions, everyone involved will need the necessary information and understanding of the complexities of the issue. They will need an opportunity to examine what the problem is, why it exists and possible solutions. Participatory research (see page 68 further information) can be useful here. As well, the group may study documents, bring in speakers and travel to see what others have done.

3. Creating a Shared Vision

A vision is a shared picture of what the group wants to accomplish, what they want to work toward, what will inspire them and give them energy. In developing a shared vision, you will need time to achieve consensus on the issue and desired solution. Developing a vision includes setting common goals and objectives as well as establishing the community commitment to long-term planning. It requires the involvement of everyone to achieve shared ownership.

4. Planning for Action

Planning for action is an extension of the process of developing a vision. It involves identifying resources, establishing a timeframe and developing a strategic plan to achieve the mutually agreed upon goals. All critical decisions should be made in a democratic and inclusive fashion.

5. Building Capacity

Building capacity involves determining the assets and strengths of the community and of the people within it and reinforcing these strengths. The key here is to focus on the **strengths** rather than on the problems. You may wish to develop a list of things that are done successfully in the community or by the group, such as organizing sporting or social events. What strengths are apparent here? How can they be transferred to the issue at hand? What supports are needed to further develop individual and community strengths?

6. Building an Enabling Environment

To build an enabling environment, determine both the supports and barriers to the initiative. Then determine whether existing systems and rules support what you are trying to achieve. Changes in protocols, grant criteria and so on may be required.

7. Action, Closure, Ongoing Development, Succession of Leadership, and Evaluation

It is critical to have this element of a community development process in mind from the beginning. If an initiative is short-term, how will the plan be put into action and the process brought to closure in a way that strengthens the community? For a long-term initiative, how will it be sustained? How will the leadership be renewed? In conducting evaluations of the process, it is critical to include community input in the evaluation criteria and processes.

Community Development Process



Community Economic Development

Community economic development is a form of community development that focuses on the economy of a region. It aims to improve living standards by creating industries and jobs, and by increasing income. It focuses on building strong and diverse relationships among the community members and the government. There are proactive and reactive approaches to community development. The proactive approach involves planning and evaluation. The reactive approach involves responding to the needs of the community. The proactive approach is also being used to build a sustainable community. The reactive approach is also being used to build a sustainable community. The proactive approach is also being used to build a sustainable community. The reactive approach is also being used to build a sustainable community.

Supporting Innovation and Change

Innovations of any sort require support. Transforming personal attitudes and organizational procedures to facilitate cooperation and collaboration among ourselves and with communities requires significant change. Working in this new way affords an opportunity for human service providers to look for ways to be more effective and responsive. Traditional attitudes, mandates and protocols may need adjustment to support public involvement and collaborative approaches. Some key questions to ask in examining the capacity of your organization to support this change include:

What is your view/attitude toward the communities/clients you work with?

- *Do you value the input and experience of community members and recognize and value their uniqueness and distinct ways of knowing?*
- *How do you personally feel about sharing information and decision making with community members?*
- *Do you think community input is critical to an informed decision?*
- *Do you think the time required to be inclusive and collaborative is worth the effort?*

Where are resources located?

- *To what extent are community members required to come to your agency rather than you going to them?*
- *Do you have the capacity/willingness to stretch your agency mandate to fill gaps in services to meet client needs?*

Where is "expertise" located?

- *Are your programming and planning methods accessible to people with a limited understanding of bureaucracy?*
- *Do your programs and materials reflect people's varying backgrounds, abilities and literacy levels?*
- *Are the opinions and experiences of non-professional, community members sought and valued?*
- *Do evaluation criteria include quantitative and qualitative outcomes and outputs?*

Where is the authority located?

- *Are community groups required to submit excessive detail in plans and budgets?*
- *Are criteria for community grants sufficiently open-ended/flexible to permit communities to meet self-identified needs in ways unique to themselves?*
- *Does your agency respond to changes in the environment as experienced by the community?*

Ethics of Good Practice for Community Development Practitioners

Community development practitioners strive to:

- Promote active and representative citizen participation so that community members can meaningfully influence decisions that affect their lives;
- Engage community members in problem diagnosis, so that those affected may adequately understand the causes of their situation;
- Help community members understand the economic, social, political, environmental, and psychological impacts associated with different possible solutions to a problem;
- Disengage from any effort that is likely to adversely affect the disadvantaged segments of a community; and,
- Actively work to increase leadership capacity (skills, confidence, and aspirations) of community members in the community development process

(International Community Development Society, 1986).

Working Together – Interagency Collaboration

Within the health, education, social services, justice, recreation and other service sectors there is a need to change structures, procedures, mandates and the culture itself so that services provided are coordinated, integrated and responsive to the changing needs of Saskatchewan people. Interagency collaboration provides an opportunity for human service providers to introduce the necessary changes that will meet this goal.

Interagency collaboration is a sophisticated interrelationship between and among agencies. It is an intensive and jointly-planned effort by people and organizations over a shared concern that results in a mutually-desired outcome. The people and agencies involved in the relationship share common goals, commitments, resources, decision making, and evaluation responsibilities (Swan and Morgan, 1993; Saskatchewan Education, 1994).

Interagency collaboration is characterized by shared planning and often formalized relations for achieving shared or compatible goals. It involves establishing a common understanding of the services provided by each agency, and determining each agency's accountability and responsibility to specific groups. **It includes deliberate efforts for close and effective interrelationships that may alter or expand the mandates, roles, protocols and policies of independent organizations, their staff and resources.**

Through interagency collaboration, different agencies work together to identify strengths and eliminate gaps between their respective services and to provide a comprehensive, responsive and integrated range of services and supports to shared clients. Unnecessary duplication is identified and eliminated, and resources are shifted and reallocated to meet needs identified for the service system. The partners are involved as equals and involve community members as active participants.

Coordinated and Integrated Service Delivery

Coordinated and integrated services are provided when human service workers plan together regarding community issues and needs, and create new configurations of service delivery. The resulting array of services is more coordinated, comprehensive, and responsive in addressing the complex needs of children and families. In integrating health, education, recreation, justice, social and other services, it is recognized that the issues facing vulnerable families and children are multi-faceted and require holistic and coordinated responses.

Objectives

The objectives of interagency collaboration and integrated services are to:

- create a collaborative culture among human service providers and systems and with community members and organizations to strengthen the effectiveness of services and programs;
- provide holistic and caring responses for vulnerable children and families;
- develop a coordinated, comprehensive and responsive continuum of human services in the province;
- make the most effective and efficient use of provincial, community and individual resources;
- ensure that services are equitable and accessible; and,
- enhance client, family and community participation in and shared responsibility for the well-being of all Saskatchewan people.

Steps in Developing Interagency Cooperation and Collaboration

The following guidelines will assist in developing interagency cooperation or collaboration to integrate the delivery of services.

1. Establish a Planning Team

Establish an interagency planning team made up of representatives from provincial, municipal and community service providers and interest groups, including health, education, social services, justice, recreation, etc., as well as members of the client group. (A committee or team committed to shared planning may already exist in the community.)

2. Conduct a Strengths-Based Needs Assessment

What are your community's strengths? What are the untapped resources and supports in your community? What are the most critical needs in your community? Are they being met? How? Are services appropriate? Coordinated? How can service delivery be strengthened? What preventative approaches are in place?

3. Partnerships

Identify potential partners to help you address the issue at hand, or to meet the needs. What supports or services can they contribute? Partners may include school or health board representatives; provincial, municipal, Indian and Métis governments; community service agencies or clubs, community groups and organizations, such as churches or businesses.

4. The Plan

Develop a plan with the participation of everyone concerned. The plan, incorporating the community's strengths includes:

- a shared vision;
- shared, achievable goals and expectations on how partners would like to see services delivered;
- supports required to achieve the vision;
- allocation or reallocation of resources;
- definition of roles and linkages for each agency;
- information and resource sharing, problem solving and reporting protocols;
- action steps with timelines;
- a commitment from partners to celebrate achievements and successes; and,
- an evaluation framework with mutual accountability.

5. Inventory of Services and Resources

Develop a strength-based inventory of existing services and resources in the community. For each partner, list the overall purpose, services provided, functions served, and the name and phone number of a contact person. Estimate the level of coordination among programs and services.

6. Service Analysis

Evaluate the match between existing services and possible solutions with the identified strengths and needs of the community. Is there a case management system in place to provide for the coordination of a number of types of services a family or individual may require? Refer to *Saskatchewan Human Services: Integrated Case Management* (October 1998) for additional information on integrated case management processes. Where can resources be reallocated? Where can new resources be found? What are the opportunities for partnership and collaboration with other communities?

7. Implementation

Identify innovative possibilities for the provision of integrated services. What are the potential advantages, supports and barriers to coordinating or integrating services? Implement specific actions from your plan.

8. Evaluation

Identify what processes are available, or must be created for monitoring and evaluating the initiative and for making changes as needed. Keep track of and acknowledge achievements and successes. Refer to *Saskatchewan Human Services: Interagency Projects Evaluation Guide* (March 1997) for additional information on interagency project evaluation.

Refer to *Working Together to Address Barriers to Learning, Integrated School-Linked Services for Children and Youth at Risk: Policy Framework* and the implementation guide by the same name available from Saskatchewan Education.

Beyond Cooperation: Tips for Achieving Collaboration

For interagency groups to move beyond cooperation to collaboration, the following tips may be of assistance:

- Keep the needs of your clients (children and families) at the centre of all discussions and problem-solving activity. Maintain a focus how clients' needs can be met, not on the limitations of your role/mandate. Ask: **How can we do this better?**
- Agency mandates can get in the way of creative problem-solving. Agree to leave mandates at the door when undertaking interagency planning.
- Remember that a great many of the clients being served are the responsibility of **all** the agencies at the table. There is a high incidence of overlap.
- Agree not to "pass the buck." (All the money at the table is public and in a sense belongs to everyone there.) Again ask: **How can we do this better? How can we collectively find a solution to our problem?**
- Discuss the "undiscussable" issues. It isn't rude to speak of other agencies' funds.

(Special thanks to John Anderson and Dennis Chubb.)

CHARACTERISTIC	COOPERATION	COLLABORATION
Mandates, Roles and Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency mandates and authority remain the same; sharing of responsibility is based on respective mandates. Collegial relationships – there is some sharing of information and lending of support to other agencies. Agencies agree to work together on specific task of definable length. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency mandates and roles alter, stretch and expand to meet needs and fill gaps. Job descriptions and agency work plans provide direction and give authority for staff to collaborate toward the delivery of holistic services. Partners are involved as equals with shared commitment. Agencies share responsibility for decisions and outcomes.
Vision and Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperating agencies have similar broad goals and serve same clients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agencies work together to create shared vision and more focussed goals based on shared principles.
Structures and Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal relations with partners – limited development of trust. Agreements are based on respective mandates. Agency procedures, policies and activities remain separate and distinct and are determined without reference to other agencies or community members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are formalized relationships with partners. Protocols are in place to support collaboration. Significant trust relationship building required.
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources may be shared for joint initiatives depending on relevance to agency mandate/funding criteria. There may be competition among agencies for resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources are pooled for shared initiatives and sometimes integrated funding source is established. Flexibility to reallocate resources beyond mandated services to fill gaps is required. A high degree of commitment, trust and time is required.
Impacts on Clients/Delivery of Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agencies deliver specific services independently and refer clients to other agencies beyond their mandate. There is some coordinated service delivery and case management. Appropriate services are more easily available, but gaps and fragmentation still happen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency procedures and protocols are revised to link and integrate services to those of other agencies. There is extensive case management Clients receive needed services in a coordinated and holistic manner. Agencies work toward shared goals. Clients' needs drive the service rather than existing programs, mandates or systems driving the services. With collaboration, the outcome is something that could not have been achieved by one agency alone.

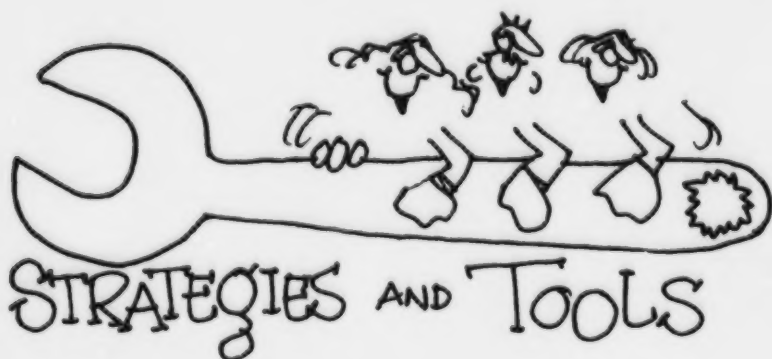
Strategies & Tools for Working with Communities

Working with communities and with each other requires strategies, techniques and tools of many different kinds, including individual and group processes, consensus building, joint planning, communications, conflict resolution, and so on. This section describes a number of strategies and tools that are helpful in public involvement, community development and interagency collaboration. This collection is by no means exhaustive. Additional suggestions may be found in the resources listed in Appendix A.

The strategies and tools are presented in three groups:

- **Building and Maintaining Constructive Relationships** - effective relationships are at the heart of this work;
- **Building Shared Knowledge and Understanding** - getting and sharing the necessary information for community members and human service workers to increase their understanding of issues and the working environment is essential; and,
- **Democratic Group Processes** - assisting community members and human service workers to plan collectively and to make decisions for group action are keys to success.

Building relationships, building shared knowledge and understanding, and democratic group processes are key to all forms of cooperative and collaborative community work. These strategies and tools are transformed into community development processes when there is an emphasis on enhancing community capacity and resources, strengthening leadership, solving problems, and including groups that historically have not been involved.



Strategies and Tools Contents

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- Collaborative Leadership Skills Inventory

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- Tips for Building Partnerships
- Creating the Working Group
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Building Mutual Trust

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- Strategic Planning
- Action Planning

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- Balance Head, Heart and Feet
- Design Your Evaluation to be Useful

Building And Maintaining Relationships

Beginning with Ourselves

Why?

When entering into partnerships of any sort, the first step is to reflect on what each one of us brings to the process. Each person brings to a collective a unique collection of experiences, values, attitudes, knowledge and skills. We also bring some baggage, which may include positive or negative past experiences or perspectives on collaborative and inclusive processes.

Cooperation and collaboration require a full range of skills and values that must be learned and adopted. We are not born with them and may not have had the opportunity to develop them.

How?

The following chart will be helpful to Saskatchewan government employees, community boards and staff such as health boards and school boards, regional college staff, community workers and volunteers making the transition from the traditional, more controlling ways of working to more inclusive and collaborative approaches.

The Controlling Way	The Partnership Way	Action Changes to make
Give orders and direction.	Explain things to people and enlist their cooperation.	Identify people involved with issue and work with them on shared concerns and responsibilities.
Fear those in positions of authority and deferred to external, "expert" advice.	Respect authority as the source of information and potential direction. Discover our own and other's wisdom in partnerships.	Ask questions when needed; take responsibility for my decisions and actions; say no to actions that violate integrity of myself or others; find the common ground.
Ignore the impact of my actions on others and the environment.	Make myself a responsible partner with others and part of a common good solution.	Consider what will do the most good for the most people while recognizing the needs of individuals. Analyze consequences of decisions in a broader context.
Don't stand up for things I believed in when they were challenged. My actions and choices didn't reflect my values.	Actions and choices reflect values.	Ground actions and decisions in personal and group values.
Plan programs and services based on agency mandates and perspective on needs.	Plan programs and services that address the needs of clients and community, recognizing that many clients are shared clients.	Use effective means to determine real needs and make decisions based on needs rather than mandates. Use resources to address needs in the most effective manner.

(Adapted from Reanne Eisler, *The Partnership Way*)

Self-Reflection

The following questions provide a framework for reflecting on your own role in and expectations from the partnership.

Why am I interested in this?	What are my goals and objectives?
What do I hope to achieve?	What do I feel and believe about the community I will be working with?
What strengths do I bring?	What are my constraints?

Collaborative Leadership Skills Inventory

Circle the number that best describes you with respect to each of the following:

	1 I need to work on this	2 I'm OK	3 I really do this well
1. Being open to new concepts and ways of working	1	2	3
2. Conflict resolution	1	2	3
3. Negotiation skills	1	2	3
4. Problem solving	1	2	3
5. Ensuring that my language is inclusive	1	2	3
6. Active listening	1	2	3
7. Clarifying	1	2	3
8. Summarizing	1	2	3
9. Interpreting	1	2	3
10. Reflecting feelings and ideas	1	2	3
11. Supporting	1	2	3
12. Empathizing	1	2	3
13. Facilitating	1	2	3
14. Initiating	1	2	3
15. Goal setting	1	2	3
16. Evaluating	1	2	3
17. Giving feedback	1	2	3
18. Suggesting	1	2	3
19. Being flexible	1	2	3
20. Modeling	1	2	3

What I need to work on: _____

What is going well: _____

Building Partnerships

Why?

Effective collaboration, public involvement and community development depend on high quality relationships and partnerships that are cooperative and collaborative in nature and are characterized by mutual trust and respect.

How?

Tips for Building Partnerships

- Work to build trust as it is the foundation for effective partnerships.
- Find energy points and go where they are. Energy points – those things that people have strong feelings or passions about – are a critical way of building connections. Respond to the energy point once it has been identified.
- Ground yourself in the concerns, priorities, energy points, and culture of the particular group or community you are working with. A top-down approach is artificial and works against building partnerships.
- Be open and willing to meet people on their own terms and on their own ground.
- Promote openness and flexibility. Partnerships and collaboration take time. Provide sufficient space to permit partners to respond to issues or to pick up on opportunities.
- Nurture the relationships. Partnerships require deliberate nurturing just like other types of constructive relationships. Bringing people together face-to-face is an important element of constructive relationships.
- Work towards integrated holistic programming to maximize the capacities of the partners. Place the situation or concern into the "big picture" or context (adapted from CUSO, 1996).



Selecting Partners

The following selection characteristics will help you to identify potential partners:

- demonstrates knowledge and skills related to issue or initiative;
- assigns priority to meeting clients' needs;
- demonstrates effective group process skills;
- deals with problems constructively and solves them effectively;
- understands the importance of balancing activities that build relationships with activities that accomplish the task;
- demonstrates a commitment to collaboration;
- is authorized to commit agency resources;
- takes risks and tries new approaches;
- promotes equality among all members and includes range of community members;
- demonstrates empathy, respect and trustworthiness; and,
- represents those who have traditionally been excluded.

(adapted from Swan & Morgan, 1993)

Creating the Working Group

A key step in creating a successful partnership is the formation of a working group or committee made up of members sharing a common concern about an issue or commitment to a preferred state or vision. Such groups form the basis for collective needs identification, planning, problem solving and actions to meet shared objectives.

The membership of a working group is very important and should include the human service agencies concerned about the issue(s) being discussed, as well as ample representation from all the community groups and individuals that have a stake in the issue or action under discussion. When members represent an organization, it is imperative that they keep their organization informed of the work of the committee.

For the process to be authentic, it is critical to include members or groups who have not traditionally had an active role, such as people in poverty, minority groups, Indian and Métis peoples, and women. (See pages 31 to 33 for suggestions on involving people who historically have not participated.)

Choosing A Facilitator

Every working committee requires a facilitator to organize and lead discussions and the planning process. It is often useful to select two co-facilitators to share overall responsibility for the administration of the working group and to provide for continuity and smooth functioning. The co-facilitators may also be responsible for such administrative tasks as calling meetings, arranging for meeting space, preparing summaries of meetings and developing membership lists.

Encouraging Participant Involvement

If a working group is to be effective, every member must play an active role. As members come from a variety of backgrounds it is critical to ensure that each member is a welcome and valuable part of the process. To facilitate the active participation of all members, consider the following:

- Welcome each member with a personal greeting.
- Build in time for sharing from each member. Have a roundtable report period early in the agenda, inviting each member to speak and provide an update and perspective on the issue under discussion.
- Model effective listening skills.
- Use a "talking stick" or other strategy to ensure that each person has an opportunity to participate in each agenda item and that all voices are heard. Try not to let a few people dominate the discussion.
- Respect each person's perspective, as well as their right to keep silent. It is important that members not feel pressured to participate.
- Watch your language. Avoid bureaucratic and specialized jargon, including acronyms and technical terms. Also be sensitive to avoid patronizing, sexist or any other form of inappropriate language.
- Be flexible about the agenda and invite participation in developing it. The agenda is a guide to help your meetings stay focused and on course, but can be adapted to facilitate group needs. While focus is a group responsibility, remind the group of the subject or task when necessary.
- If the group is larger than six or seven people you may wish to divide into smaller groups of two or three for discussion of difficult issues, with each group reporting back to the whole, then coming to a decision in the larger group. Each of the smaller groups may raise a different perspective and some people will be more confident expressing themselves in the smaller group.
- Try to get to know each member of your group and encourage group members to get to know one another.
- Seek a balance in your own participation.
- Remember that facilitating or chairing a group meeting is an art. It is enhanced with practice and requires continual reflection and feedback.

Formalizing Agreements to Work Together

A formal agreement or protocol for the working group members is useful to clarify and make explicit the understandings about the purpose of the partnership; the intentions or objectives; the roles, responsibilities and specific contributions of the different players; and the ways in which decisions will be made, conflict resolved, and the activities carried out.

While protocols may vary, they generally have three sections, including the preamble, the protocol agreement, and the signing agencies.

Note: If the group is a coalition of organizations rather than a collection of individuals, the protocol will need to be ratified by the organizations themselves.

Protocol Elements

1. **Preamble** – The context for the protocol is provided, including statements concerning rationale, commitment, purpose, objectives, basic principles (shared values and beliefs).
2. **Protocol Agreement** – The specific contributions of each partner, including **detail on the participating agencies** (names of agencies, target population, definition/description of services to be provided, reason for service provision); **background** (procedure used to identify and assess target and needs); **obligations and responsibilities** (services and resources to be provided, consultation processes, outline of shared plan; problem solving approach, record-keeping method, decision making approach, monitoring and evaluation, timeframe, renewal, etc.).
3. **Signing Agencies** – The individuals responsible for the approval of the protocol sign it to indicate shared responsibility and commitment.

Building Mutual Trust

Why?

Mutual trust and respect are the foundations for working with communities and with one another, especially in a cooperative or collaborative mode. However, trust and respect cannot be forced or insisted upon. They must be earned and developed among partners, over time. Trust can develop honest and open communication about shared goals, objectives and dreams.

How?

Tips for Building Trust Between Individuals and Groups

- be respectful of other people;
- be honest about your intentions and motives;
- be open about plans and agendas;
- acknowledge mistakes and provide opportunities for recoveries;
- acknowledge disagreements and anxieties;
- resolve conflicts proactively;
- share the agenda and be open to influence and change; and,
- have staying power through ups and downs.



Including the Excluded

Why?

Public involvement, community development and interagency collaboration emphasize the inclusion of as many groups and individuals as possible who are affected by or involved in an issue. This recognizes that complex issues are better identified and understood when a full range of perspectives is brought to the analysis. As well, solutions are more effective when all who will be affected are involved in their development.

Some groups in our communities have traditionally not been involved in organizations due to limited powers or resources. These include:

- Indian and Métis peoples – who are not involved for reasons such as geographical distance, cultural preferences related to working style, racism, past experience, and resulting distrust;
- people living in poverty – who have to spend a good deal of their time and energy on meeting their basic needs are often isolated by limited time and energy, lower levels of formal education or access to transportation;
- women – who are often excluded or choose not to participate because of different interests and family responsibilities. (Depending on the topic, groups in our society typically have an imbalance of females and males);
- people with disabilities – who may live in isolation or may have challenges with transportation, health or physical access;
- seniors – who may not be involved because of isolation, transportation and health; and,
- children and younger adults – whose opinions and contributions are too often overlooked.

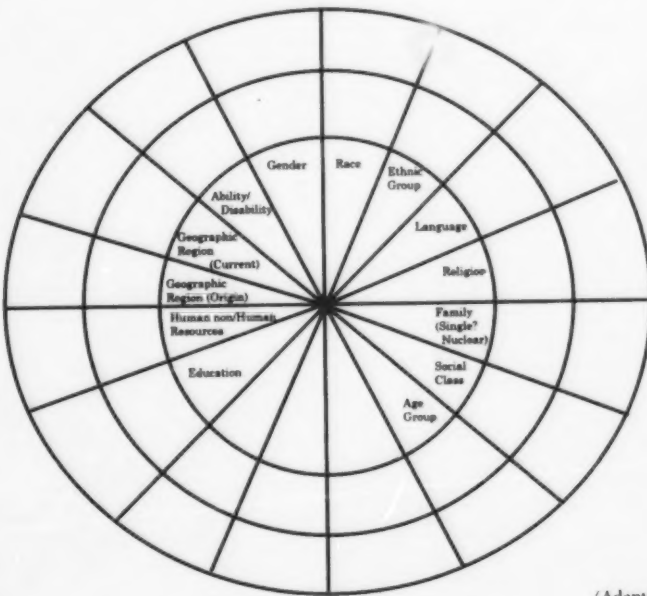
Achieving fully inclusive involvement requires a proactive effort.

How?

Understanding and Appreciating Differences

The following exercise is useful for a group to individually and collectively reflect on the social identities of their group members. The social identities may include their cultural and ethnic backgrounds, life experiences, gender, and other differences. The diagram can also be used to analyze a community in relationship to a wider context. There are three blank spaces to allow additions specific to your community. To assess your presence with respect to the community in which you live, place yourself on inner sections of the chart and fill in the community characteristics on the outer circle.

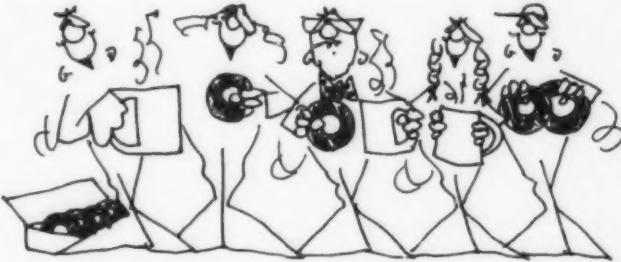
To analyze the community in respect to your region, province, etc. participants place the community characteristics on the inner sections and the larger region characteristics on the outer ones. You may wish to discuss the causes and consequences of the differences.



(Adapted from Arnold et al.)

Being Proactive and Inclusive

- **Make personal contact** – Extend personal invitations to people from groups who traditionally have not been involved. Volunteer to provide transportation or to keep a look out for them to welcome and introduce them when they arrive.
- **Focus on maintaining an open and inclusive atmosphere** – Establish a warm and welcoming environment, providing a balance between formal and informal meeting styles, and attending to human and personal issues.
- **Use clear and sensitive language** – Avoid bureaucratic and technical language. Use oral communication extensively if literacy is a concern.
- **Facilitate access** – Take into account location, transportation needs, work shifts, child-care needs, accessibility of facilities, alternative formats (such as tape, sign language, or Braille), etc. in planning meetings.
- **Socialize** – Whenever possible, build in a social component to the meeting such as a coffee break and a snack or lunch. Sharing food is both symbolic and also effective in building trusting relationships.
- **Respect Cultural Traditions** – For example, approaching Indian and Métis Elders involves specific traditions.



Resolving Conflict

Why?

Conflict of some form is inevitable in group work. It need not be viewed as a weakness. If handled effectively, differences of opinion can be healthy for a group, leading to innovative and creative proposals. Dealing with conflict and resolving differences in a constructive way is critical to building relationships and achieving shared goals.

Conflicts are very much like icebergs – a small portion is visible; the rest is hidden. If we only address the visible part of the conflict, the iceberg becomes unstable and another portion surfaces. The visible portion may be seen as the *presenting problem* – the part of the conflict that people are aware of, while the portion beneath the surface is the underlying problem.

Determining and understanding the elements of an *underlying problem* are critical to effective problem solving.

How?

Avoiding or Resolving Potentially Destructive Conflict by:

- describing opposing positions as clearly as possible and seeking clarification until all are satisfied with and comprehend the descriptions;
- exploring the *whys* as well as the *whats* of positions;
- encouraging participant responsibility for the process;
- seeking agreement on the process, not the positions;
- challenging the idea or action not the person;
- asking questions to clarify or probe reasons;
- identifying what you have in common;
- acknowledging how you connect to a problem;
- not assuming that a difference is larger than it may be; and,
- ensuring that the solution does **not** involve one side winning at the expense of the other. There can be no losers (adapted from Arnold et al.).

Achieving Win-Win Results

Win-win solutions are the best possible outcome for conflict resolution in partnerships. In seeking to achieve win-win results, both sides in a conflict achieve the major elements of what they are looking for or want in a solution. This involves finding a creative solution, often something that neither side even conceived of until they worked together on the challenge.

In win-win solutions the parties are not seeking *compromise*, where the solution may be less than each or both had hoped for. Instead, *consensus* is sought and through synergy, a better result is achieved for all.

There are three key elements in a win-win conflict resolution process:

1. Mutual agreement among the conflicting parties to work together for a solution.
2. A positive response to the question: *Are we willing to search for a solution that is better than what we are presently seeking individually?*
3. Agreement to accept one key guideline for influencing positive discussion: *Seek first to understand, then to be understood.* This means that before you can make your own position known, you need to listen to and be able to articulate the other person's point of view to their satisfaction.

Experience with this approach has proven that it delivers highly satisfactory results for everyone (adapted from Covey, 1989).

Using Third Party Interventions, if Required

There are a number of conflict resolution methods, ranging from informal, unassisted one-on-one discussion, to legal and binding arbitration. In the informal and non-binding methods, such as self-direction, negotiation or mediation, the parties have more control over decision making, there is more compliance with the outcome, and there are more alternatives available. An impartial third party may be called in to assist in identifying issues, exploring options, and clarifying goals. A mutually acceptable agreement is reached freely and voluntarily. As more external and binding methods are used, there is more coercion and the process is usually time consuming and costly.

Negotiation:

Negotiation is a means to manage or resolve conflict that involves making decisions in a way that best serves the interests of all parties. Negotiation can mean different things to different people. Some people may adopt a "win at all costs" philosophy, while others will use a compromise approach. A third approach is mutual satisfaction or win-win as defined above. This style of negotiation is based on open, honest discussion and trust and respect among the parties involved. In successful negotiation, both parties will be satisfied and a supportive relationship will be built.

Tips for successful negotiation:

- clarify the problem/subject first. Write the problem out in a single sentence;
- determine and discuss the information necessary to make an informed decision. Ensure all parties are equally informed;
- identify the goals and bottom lines of all parties;
- identify points of disagreement so that all parties are clear on the stand each takes on the issue;
- make a list of criteria against which you can measure the ideal solution;
- create options for resolving or managing the problem, invent options first; judge them later;
- search for mutual gains by measuring the options against your criteria;
- select an option; and,
- plan the implementation (adapted from Health and Welfare Canada, 1986).

Mediation:

Mediation is a conflict resolution process through which participants come to an informed and mutually-acceptable settlement through the help of an impartial facilitator or mediator. The mediator works through a structured process with the two parties to identify issues, explore options and clarify goals. The mediator is responsible for ensuring that the parties reach agreement freely, voluntarily and on the basis of informed consent. The process is only effective when parties to a proposal are willing to negotiate and attempt to settle a dispute through mediation.

Some tips for successful mediation include:

- selecting a skilled mediator who is impartial to all parties involved;
- ensuring that all parties understand the nature of the mediation process and role of the mediator before consenting to mediation;
- maintaining confidentiality throughout the process; and,
- maintaining the right of parties to withdraw from mediation at any time and for the mediator to terminate the process if he or she believes that participants are unable or unwilling to participate.

Arbitration:

Arbitration is a process that involves a high degree of third party involvement in the resolution of conflict. Parties to a conflict select an independent arbitrator. The conflicting parties present their positions to the arbitrator who conducts whatever research is necessary to fully understand the situation. The arbitrator then presents what he or she believes is an equitable solution. In binding arbitration, both sides agree in advance to accept the solution proposed by the arbitrator. In non-binding arbitration, both sides reserve judgement until they have seen the arbitrator's recommendation (Government of Saskatchewan, 1994).

Maintaining Energy

Why?

Working with communities can be very rewarding for human service providers. It can also be taxing at a personal level. Community involvement and development as well as interagency collaboration are all time consuming processes. They are also political processes in that they engage other people and agencies in activities to strengthen capacity and empower. The different perspectives of people within and among different agencies and communities, as well as different mandates, procedures and priorities, can be the cause of barriers and frustrations in pursuing inclusive and collaborative work.

It is important to remember that the emergence of problems can be a sign of success – and an opportunity to make needed changes. Nevertheless, human service providers can experience feelings of discouragement over the long term. To sustain energy and commitment to collaborative and inclusive processes, proactive strategies are important.

How?

Keeping Commitment and Energy Levels High

To keep your energy and commitment levels high for this important work, it is critical to maintain a personal and professional balance. This involves:

- ensuring a balance in your work and personal life, between action and reflection, and between work and play;
- maintaining diversity in issues, contacts and partnerships to prevent stagnation and boredom;
- maintaining creative activities, such as recreation, celebration, team brainstorming and fun, to show the way to new possibilities and personal expression;
- seeking out and associating with like-minded people to provide a sense of community;
- being connected with children and adults who have positive values, attitudes and energy;
- having patience and keeping your eye on your goals or long-term vision;
- choosing silence and solitude to restore and maintain an inner calm and strength; and,
- developing your sense of meaning and humour (adapted from Downton and Wehr, 1996).

Building Shared Knowledge and Understanding

Building shared knowledge and understanding among all participants is key to working effectively with communities. Virtually all relationships and interactions among human service providers and community members involve the exchange of information and ideas toward greater, shared understanding of needs, issues and complexities in providing more effective services. People come to collaborative initiatives with different experiences and perspectives. Dialogue and other opportunities are needed to elicit a range of opinions and to achieve consensus on an overall perspective. This section provides strategies and tools for sharing information and gaining the necessary shared understanding to work together effectively.

Strengthening Communications Skills

Why?

Effective communication is key to successfully working together. Good communication begins with each individual. In order for a partnership to function effectively, everyone involved will need to feel comfortable in communicating their ideas and views with others. This will require a climate of open, honest communication where people feel their views are valued.

How?

In addition to practising effective individual communications skills, effective communications strategies and practices will assist in establishing an environment for good communication. Practices might include:

- planning meetings well in advance and ensuring that everyone is notified;
- providing an opportunity for participants to freely state their concerns;
- receiving criticism in a non-defensive manner;
- encouraging solution-seeking rather than complaint-oriented sessions; and,
- being respectful of differences in perspective (Saskatchewan Education, 1997).

Building Upon People's Experiences

Why?

The different experiences and perspectives of all members in a collaborative venture are integral to successful planning and problem solving. Sharing and reflecting upon past experiences are an important part of moving forward. When you begin with *what people know*, you are in effect telling them that you value their knowledge and that their experience is important. This also helps people recognize their own personal capacity and resources and become more confident in building on these.

How?

Research and experience tell us a great deal about how adults learn that is directly applicable in working with communities:

- Adults must feel respected; it helps when their level of existing knowledge and experience is acknowledged and when the motives and agenda of your agency are clear.
- Adult learners are self-directed; they like to decide what they want to learn and how they would like to learn.
- Adult learners like to be involved in the learning process.
- Adult learners are experiential; they learn through daily life experiences. It helps when their experience is used.
- Adults learn from what is meaningful and relevant to them; communication based on needs specific to the community will be more likely reach them.
- Adult learning creates some anxiety; communication is intended to persuade or motivate a change in behaviour (adapted from Ferguson, 1989).

Drawing Out People's Experience and Knowledge

Consider:

- what experience gets shared, where and why;
- how much information you want to discuss in the full group;
- the emotional impact of sharing experience;
- the social identities and mixture of the group; and,
- the ways in which participants' experiences relate to the topic.



Understanding the Context

Why?

Working with community on an issue requires understanding the context in which the issue is situated, including related issues, values, history, leadership, relationships, goals, social and economic influences, etc.

To assess the context of an issue, it is useful to:

- **identify all aspects of the issue** – this involves gaining as much understanding and perspective as possible, including looking for root causes, not simply defining symptoms. It also involves determining interrelated issues and influences;
- **assess the forces** – what are the positive and negative impacts influencing the issue and your ability to address it. What are the dominant perspectives. Who is working in support of the direction you want? What are some other supports? What are the barriers?; and,
- **understand the social and economic influences** – what are the social and economic situations and interests of the people you are working with?

Understanding what steps are needed and who can help in influencing the change or solution you are seeking is key.

How?

Creating a Community Profile

A community or social profile is useful in gaining information about a community before beginning to work with them. A clear picture of the community you intend to work with will help you avoid offending community members – you will have a better understanding of their values, goals, issues, strengths, resources, concerns and needs.

A social profile can be compiled for either a geographic or sectoral community. You will use different sources of information for each of the different types of community. Sources of information might include newspapers, local histories, local libraries, minutes of organizations and discussions with community members.

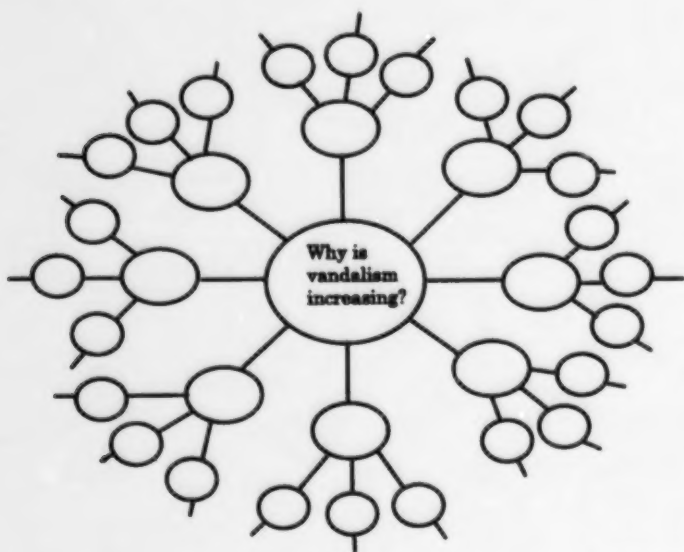
Following are three tools to assist in carrying out an analysis of a community:

The Social Tree

This tool uses the metaphor of a tree to develop a picture of a community. The roots of the tree provide the base, feeding the growth of the tree. This is the economic system, strengths and other resources of the community. The trunk and branches represent the political and social structures, organizations and institutions. The leaves are the issues, perspectives and ideas in the community.

The Web Chart

This tool can be used to explore the cause of an event or issue and its consequences. In this exploration, the objective of the web chart is to identify all aspects of the issue or concern. This includes identifying the immediate, secondary and tertiary causes in such a way that the different levels are clearly weighted regarding their impact.



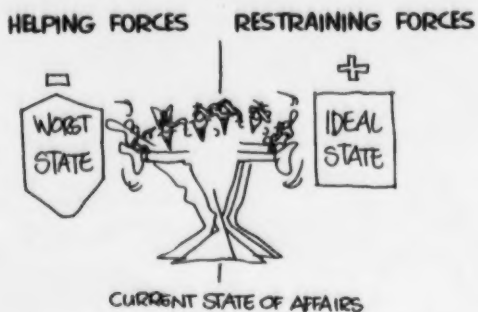
(Adapted from Smith, 1991)

This method may be helpful when a group feels that the factors around an issue are so complicated that they are unsure how to begin. Starting with a central issue, such as vandalism, the participants develop a chart listing its causes and consequences. The discussion then goes into a deeper level where a holistic range of causes and consequences are identified. This may continue to a third or even a fourth round. This will provide a comprehensive base of shared knowledge and can be used for planning and problem-solving.

Force Field Analysis

Force Field Analysis is a process that enables a group to define and analyze a problem in a manner that results in a plan of action for change. Participants are asked to write down several dominant concerns they have about an issue. They then identify the forces that enable and those that hinder the change they are looking for. In small groups, people are asked to identify common concerns and solutions, and to design a plan of action.

In planning action for change, the key is to focus on converting a negative force – something that is hindering the change you want – to a supportive one. Social change research has demonstrated that if you focus on simply on adding more helping forces, you will only succeed in strengthening tensions between those opposed to the change and those in favour. Place your focus on turning restraining forces into helping ones.



(Adapted from Kurt Lewin's Field Theory)

Adding New Information

Why?

Understanding a specific community situation or issue often requires obtaining new information, details and facts that are not readily apparent.

How?

A variety of methods can be used to obtain information, including consulting with the community and other knowledgeable people, reviewing pertinent literature, studying historical and current documents and newspapers and looking at the experience of other communities or jurisdictions.

Seeking Out Appropriate, Accurate and Complete Information

Information comes in many forms, from personal experience to documented research and statistics. Knowing how to seek out information and to evaluate its authenticity, validity and usefulness is often critical in working effectively with communities.

Some questions to ask in determining the validity and usefulness of information include:

- *How relevant and current is the information?*
- *Is the source reliable and can the information be verified?*
- *Does the information reflect or disagree with popular opinion?*
- *Does the information contribute to a holistic understanding of the complexities of the issue?*
- *Is the information respectful of everyone involved? This includes ensuring that it is free of racial, gender or any other bias.*

Using People's Stories

People's stories, their oral retelling of their experiences, background and beliefs, are an important source of information in working with communities. Personal stories not only enrich, but also increase understanding of issues and their meanings in a community. They may also provide new ways of looking at issues and new solutions. Because people have diverse experiences and needs, their stories may not provide a single, straightforward answer to a decision. Assessing the implications of personal stories is the heart of community work.

Using Qualitative and Quantitative Information

Both qualitative and quantitative information is useful in gaining understanding of a community or an issue. Qualitative information can capture the perspective or experience of the people, Quantitative information such as statistics, rates and percentages can provide needed precision in describing an issue or need.

Surveys

Surveys can be used to solicit opinions and build a profile of the issue or need under discussion. They are useful in gaining input and understanding of the perspectives of a diverse population because they ensure that a broad base of people are included. In developing a survey, key considerations include:

- ensuring that the list of people to be surveyed is representative of the target or full population;
- avoiding cultural or gender bias;
- ensuring accessible literacy levels; and,
- including appropriate questions and wording to elicit required feedback.

It is always helpful to test your survey instrument with a focus group to see that the intended meanings of your questions are clearly understood and interpreted.

Consulting with the Public

There are a variety of forms of public consultation. Questionnaires, public meetings, coffee klatches and informal discussions are examples of potential approaches. A key consideration is to ensure that you select an approach that will provide the level of input you require and include all who have a stake in the issue. While public consultation provides information about stakeholders' opinions and views, it does not necessarily involve the degree of shared ownership or shared decision making apparent in in other types of involvement, such as partnerships and self-determination.

Focus Groups

This can be a particularly useful way of gaining information from a cross-section of people with diverse opinions. Selected individuals (8-10) are invited to a relatively informal session to discuss the various aspects of a particular topic or question. A skilled and unbiased facilitator conducts the session, usually beginning with a standard set of questions, but using prompting and probing to ensure that the topic is fully discussed and that all individuals contribute their views. The advantage is that the participants can provide their views in their own words and can go beyond the standard set of questions if they choose. They can explain their point of view, challenge the relevancy of the issue at hand or add other issues, if they wish.

In a focus group, the group dynamic acts as a catalyst, causing ideas to be generated among members, one building upon the next. The focus group can provide a snapshot of community opinion when time constraints or finances do not allow a full review or survey. They can also be used to supplement other techniques and provide another source of information.

Some caution is helpful in using focus groups. The views of the participants cannot be taken to represent those of all the persons in their community or even in their target group. Although they provide an understanding about a situation or an attitude, they do not provide knowledge of the magnitude of that attitude. Also the group interaction may inhibit some aspects of discussion – participants may bow to peer pressure in their views, or they may not disclose private information or opinions.

Key Informant Interviews

Key informants are selected because they can provide critical information or because of their experience and knowledge about the issues in question. Most of these people will be from the community, but some may also be from an agency or community organization.

Informants are interviewed in person about their opinions and practices. Use a partially structured format to ask questions rather than a formal questionnaire to ensure that the people interviewed will express their thoughts in their own way. Interviews allow participants to express a range of information that might not be included on a questionnaire and may identify new issues or concerns previously not considered.

Discussion or Position Paper

Discussion papers are useful to examine and elicit discussion of the issues surrounding a proposed action, policy or program. The paper is circulated to a full range of people with a stake in the issue to review and respond to. This process is helpful in achieving consensus on the elements of a complex issue, and on a proposed solution.

Position papers include the source of the paper, where to send feedback, a contact for further information, and the intended use of the comments received. As well, sufficient time must be provided to permit groups time to respond (at least two months). After all submissions have been received and analyzed, a follow-up paper is released to communicate findings, a decision or direction.



Participatory Discussion

Why?

Good group discussion is essential to all of the strategies described in this booklet. Discussion and formulation of new ideas can be enhanced by good facilitation.

Conventional Groups	Participatory Groups
<p>The fastest thinkers and most articulate speakers get more air time.</p> <p>People interrupt each other on a regular basis.</p> <p>Differences of opinion are treated as conflict that must either be stifled or "solved."</p> <p>Questions are often perceived as challenges, as if the person questioned has done wrong.</p> <p>Unless the speaker captivates their attention, people may become inattentive, doodle or check the clock.</p> <p>People may have difficulty listening to each other's ideas because they're busy rehearsing what they want to say.</p> <p>Some members remain quiet on controversial matters. It is not quite clear where everyone stands.</p> <p>People may rarely give accurate representations of the opinions and reasoning of those whose opinions are at odds with their own.</p> <p>People talk behind each other's backs outside the meeting, because they don't feel permission to be direct during the meeting.</p> <p>People with discordant, minority perspectives are commonly discouraged from speaking out.</p> <p>A problem is considered solved as soon as the fastest thinkers have reached an answer.</p> <p>When people make an agreement, it is assumed that they are all thinking exactly the same thing.</p>	<p>Everyone participates, not just the vocal few.</p> <p>People give each other room to think and get their thoughts all the way out.</p> <p>Opposing viewpoints are allowed to co-exist.</p> <p>People draw each other out with supportive questions. "Is this what you mean?"</p> <p>Each member makes the effort to pay attention to the person speaking.</p> <p>People are able to listen to each other's ideas because they know their own ideas will also be heard.</p> <p>Each member speaks up on controversial matters. Everyone knows everyone stands.</p> <p>Members can accurately represent each other's point of view, even when they don't agree with them.</p> <p>People refrain from talking behind each other's backs.</p> <p>Even in the face of opposition, people are encouraged to stand up for their beliefs.</p> <p>A problem is not considered solved until everyone who will be affected by the solution understands the reasoning.</p> <p>When people make an agreement, it is assumed that the decision still reflects a wide range of perspectives.</p>

(Adapted from Kaner, 1996)

How?

Effective Facilitation

To facilitate open discussion:

- understand that there are different communication styles;
- paraphrase what people have said to ensure it has been understood and to assure them they have been heard;
- draw out people who are less likely to contribute at first, or encourage people to elaborate on an idea;
- encourage and manage different perspectives, listen for common ground;
- keep track of the different currents, organizing the flow of discussion and of speakers, and dealing with difficult dynamics; and,
- tolerate silence; intentionally create silence.

To work with discomfort:

- name what you think it is;
- probe what people say they mean;
- don't be afraid of silence;
- give support to talk about feelings;
- ask permission to pursue discomfort;
- ensure there will be time to heal;
- encourage participant contributions; and,
- know when to move on.

To establish credibility and share the expert role:

- take time with introductions;
- negotiate objectives with participants;
- acknowledge participant skills; and,
- speak to familiar aspects of the organizational culture (*adapted from Arnold et al., 1991*).

Small Groups

If the group you are working with is large, you may find it helpful to break in into smaller groups to:

- enhance people's participation in discussion. In fact, some people, especially those with limited experience in community work, will only speak in smaller groups. Small group discussion also enables participants to pursue the topic in a more in-depth and unstructured way;
- develop new ideas and new options. The enhanced and unstructured participation afforded by small groups increases the chance of new ideas emerging and new options being formulated; and,
- maintain a distinction between discussion mode and decision making mode. Decisions should be made with all persons in the larger group present so that everyone has the opportunity to respond to others' points.

Small groups can take the form of open discussions or alternatives, such as presentations and reports, brainstorming, and structured rounds of discussion, where each person is given an opportunity to speak.



Generating Alternatives

Why?

Working with communities and resolving problems and issues require creativity and very often the ability to generate alternative solutions that have not been thought of before and that satisfy a variety of positions and needs.

How?

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a useful technique for generating ideas in a group. In facilitating a brainstorming session:

- Encourage participants to generate as many ideas as possible.
- Have a recorder list all ideas on a flip chart.
- Encourage participants to be as creative as possible.
- Do not evaluate any of the ideas at this point. The aim is to get as many ideas out as possible. Even seemingly impractical ideas may trigger a new line of thinking that may be useful.
- Record all ideas.

Card Technique

Use the card technique to preserve participants' original thoughts while brainstorming. The cards allow brainstormed ideas to be easily grouped and reordered. Some tips:

- Set the context: the facilitator states the issue or problem to be solved.
- Brainstorm: the facilitator asks focus questions, and the participants are asked to quickly jot down a number of their individual ideas to respond to the questions. Participants may write ideas directly on cards or may work in small groups, eliminating duplication and determining the ideas to go forward on cards to the total group.
- Group: the total group organizes the cards into categories.
- Name: the group determines names for each of the groupings or categories.
- Evaluate: the facilitator helps the group reflect upon the work they have done.

Exploring Inclusive Principles

Sometimes the challenge of working with communities involves resolving a situation where different members of the community have different views as to the appropriate solution. In providing the leadership needed to synthesize seemingly opposing alternatives into a solution, ask the question, "How can we do both?" Some additional tips:

- Question anything that seems impossible.
- Challenge fixed assumptions; just because something has always been done one way doesn't mean it has to be done that way in the future.
- Back up from solutions and start with needs, then search for a solution that meets everyone's needs.
- Include the "trouble-makers" in the solution.
- Divide the problem into independent parts and solve each separately.
- Create more interdependence between the alternatives.
- Find out how others have solved a similar problem.
- Initiate joint ventures with new partners and search for resources from unusual sources.
- Negotiate for more time if you need it.

Creatively Reframing an Issue

Once people perceive a problem in a particular way, they may find it difficult to see that problem any other way. Assist people in a group to reframe the problem – to dramatically alter the nature of a problem, enabling them to find new ways to resolve it.

Ask: *What's unchangeable about this problem?*

1. At the top of a flip chart, write "What's unchangeable about our problem?"
2. List everyone's answers.
3. Ask the group to look over the list and identify any hidden assumptions and biases. Encourage open discussion.
4. Based on these insights, list any aspects of the problem that may be changeable after all.

Reverse Assumptions

1. Hang a sheet of chart paper titled Assumptions about this Problem.
2. Have the group list its beliefs about:
 - the causes of the problem; and,
 - the connections between different aspects of the problem.
3. Ask someone to select an item from the list and reverse it.
4. Ask, "How could we bring about this new opposite state of affairs?" Encourage a brainstorm of answers.
5. Choose another assumption and repeat steps 3 and 4. When done, discuss ideas that seem promising (adapted from Kaner, 1996).

Democratic Group Practice

Creating and Maintaining a Vision and Goals

Why?

Creating and maintaining a vision is useful in focusing the hopes and aspirations of a group or community and in framing a project and setting priorities. The vision describes where the group or community members would like the community to be in key quality-of-life areas in the future. Visioning is a process that matches needs with resources and focuses them on achieving a desired state. The vision statement reflects the commonly held values of the community and guides participants in joint action. Working groups can periodically revisit their vision to check on their direction and to inspire themselves. From time to time, a useful question to ask is, *Where do we want to be?*

How?

Creating a Vision and Goals

Effective processes for creating a shared vision and goals include:

- providing an opportunity for all the people involved to exchange and debate ideas and to reach a consensus on the ideal state and goals for the future. Goals are shared and achievable directions that reflect the vision and contribute to its achievement;
- listening to the perspectives and experiences of other team members;
- asking difficult questions and collectively searching for the responses;
- developing a common vision statement and a list of goals;
- defining the roles for each person/agency involved; and,
- identifying the supports that will be needed, and where they might be found, to achieve the vision. (These might include financial and human resources, information or additional partners.)



Making Decisions

Why?

Decision points are critical times in the life of a working group and in working with community. The effectiveness of both the decision making process and the decision itself have a significant impact on the strength and effectiveness of the group. Meaningful decisions have two things in common: first, everyone with a stake is involved in the discussion that formulates the decision; and second, people have the opportunity to provide sufficient input so that they feel their perspective has been fairly considered. They are thus either in total agreement with the decision, or are satisfied that the process was fair and they can support the decision.

Decisions, be they small or large, through their process shape the nature of a group, and through their substance point the direction for change.

How?

Basic Steps To Decision Making

There are six basic steps to making a decision:

- **Name the problem** – Recognize and define what it is you are determining; what is the problem and what do you hope to resolve?
- **Get information and analyze** – What information do you have about the problem or aspects of the decision to be made? Do you have all the facts? Where can you get more information?
- **Identify the alternatives** – What are all of the possible solutions or directions based on your information. What are the consequences of each alternative? Prioritize the possible options.
- **Make the decision** – Narrow the options and make your decision.
- **Implement or act on the decision** – What supports or resources are needed to implement the decision? Who needs to be included/advised? What is the timeline? Accountability?
- **Evaluate the decision** – Are you and the group happy with the results of the decision? Were there any negative consequences you had not anticipated? Would you do it differently next time?



Decision Making Styles

Choose an appropriate decision making style for the circumstances. Each of the following styles may be appropriate under different circumstances:

- **Autonomous:** Informing only those who need to know, you make the decision. You do not consult others because the decision is unimportant to them, has no impact on their work, or needs only you to implement.
- **Consultative:** You inform others before you make the decision, because you are seeking advice, additional information or support from the implementers, from those whose work will be affected, or from those who may be barriers.
- **Consensus:** To find common ground, you probe the issues until everyone's opinions are understood, especially opposing opinions. You do this because the decision will impact those who will implement or be affected by it, require the commitment of those affected, or have trust and open communication. You close discussion with agreement on how to proceed.
- **Democratic:** You discuss the options sufficiently so that people understand the consequences of the majority vote. You do this because you want to know what different people think of various options; the decision affects the work of others; you are willing to have winners and losers; or you don't have time for consensus-building, but still want the group to make a decision. Here you establish the ground rule that the losers support the decision, even though it was not their choice. Then you hold the vote and count.
- **Delegated:** You present the situation and clarify expectations and responsibilities for making and implementing the decision. You do this because the decision affects the work of others; others possess necessary knowledge, skills, experience, and resources; or others know the limits of the situation. When delegating, you clarify any constraints on the authority to act and set a time for reporting back to the group.

See pages 43 to 50 for information on adding new information, creating good discussion, generating alternatives, and reframing and resolving conflicts. Such strategies are key to good decision making. If your group has built common understandings, and established positive ways of disagreeing while maintaining trust in each other, then decision making will move more smoothly.

Remember, good decision making balances commitment both to the task and to maintaining effective relationships. In public involvement, community development and interagency collaboration, active participation in decision making and growth in leadership are part of the agenda.

Conducting a Needs Identification and Assessment

Why?

Needs assessments are performed to identify programming or service needs in a community. In such an assessment, the values, strengths and resources of the community are identified and an assessment of how well needs are being met is conducted. Needs assessments go beyond public consultation to include more analytical and reflective processes that combine information and values.

Needs identification and assessment helps you to plan programs based on people's *actual* needs rather than *on your assumptions* of what their needs are. Successful programs and services are based on *real* rather than *assumed* needs and build on existing strengths and resources.

How?

The following steps are part of a needs identification process:

- Determine whether other needs assessments have been performed recently in your community or with this group of people and assess whether the findings from this assessment are applicable to your project.
- Determine whether there are processes in place for identifying and monitoring your group's needs and concerns.
- Create a preliminary vision for the ideal state for your group in terms of holistic and integrated supports.
- Identify whom you need to talk to, what process you will use to obtain information about needs, and who will collect the information.
- Design the instruments or processes such as questionnaires, interview discussion guides, workshops, etc.
- Collect the information on needs and analyze and rank them in order of importance.
- Take into account interconnected nature of needs in assigning priority to them.

Remember that it is critical to include your clients in identifying needs and defining problems.

Health Needs Assessment Guide for Saskatchewan Health Districts (Saskatchewan Health) and Integrated School-Linked Services for Children and Youth at Risk: Implementation Guide (Saskatchewan Education) provide further information about planning and conducting needs assessments.

Building Sustainable Agreements

Why?

Building agreement among groups and individuals that will last over time and serve as a foundation for shared planning and problem solving into the future is key to collaborative and community work. Sustainable agreements require time and effort to develop, but are well worth it.

The basis for sustainable agreements as well as effective decision making are participatory values. They provide members of a group with a set of grounding principles for conducting their meeting. These principles include:

- full participation;
- mutual understanding;
- inclusive solutions; and,
- shared responsibility.

Commitment to these values produces significant results, including:

Individual Learning	Group Learning	Sustainable Agreements
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• improved leadership skills;• stronger powers of reasoning;• more confidence;• more commitment;• better communication skills; and,• greater ability to assume broader and more difficult responsibilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• greater ability to use multiple talents;• access to more types of information;• development of a respectful, supportive atmosphere;• clear procedures for handling group dynamics; and,• increased capacity for tackling difficult problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• more ideas;• higher quality ideas;• solutions that integrate everyone's goals;• wiser decisions; and,• more reliable follow-through.

How?

Build Sustainable Agreements By:

- gathering diverse points of view;
- building a shared framework of understanding;
- developing inclusive solutions; and,
- developing thinking skills.

Facilitating Group Problem Solving

There are three stages, or zones, which a group must work through to reach agreement on a topic where there are divergent views. Following are some tips for a group facilitator:

- **The Divergent Zone:** The facilitator encourages the maximum contribution of everyone, in particular divergent, risky and creative inputs. There are three types of divergent thinking:
 1. surveying the territory and identifying the aspects of the problem under the discussion;
 2. searching for alternatives and generating different options; and,
 3. raising difficult issues.

Activities such as brainstorming or sharing circles might be helpful here. An attitude of suspended judgment is fostered to encourage people to speak freely.

- **The Groan Zone:** This is a difficult period when the different ideas and concepts must be dealt with by the group. The group cannot resolve an issue until the members understand each other's perspectives. At this stage, people have to wrestle with unfamiliar concepts and different biases. They have to try to understand each other's reasoning, even if they don't agree with the conclusions. The facilitator's main objective here is to assist the group to develop a shared framework of understanding. Creating shared context and strengthening relationships assist in doing this.

Structured discussions are used in which people are encouraged to express each other's perspectives and put themselves in each other's shoes. When an argument seems to be going around in circles, it can be helpful to stop arguing over proposed solutions or positions, and start talking about client or individual needs.

- **The Convergent Zone:** This is the process of developing a decision or solution. Once a shared framework of understanding has been developed, the likelihood of finding inclusive alternatives is higher. There are three types of convergent thinking:
 1. exploring inclusive principles that promote creative problem-solving (see page 50);
 2. creative reframing or trying to look at the problem in a new way; and,
 3. strengthening good ideas or applying critical reasoning to potential solutions to refine their logic and quality (adapted from Kaner. 1996).

Planning

Why?

Alice: Which way should I go?
 Cat: That depends on where you are going.
 Alice: I don't know where I'm going!
 Cat: Then it doesn't matter which way you go!
 (Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*)

Working cooperatively and collaboratively requires even more attention to planning than traditional approaches, because of the need to involve a variety of people, to solicit and synthesize a range of opinions and to communicate clear and consistent direction.

Planning is a form of group decision making and the strategies for participatory decision making and building sustainable agreements also apply to it. See pages 50, 52, 53, 55 and 56 for more information.

How?

Planning to Plan

There are four key components in effective planning: people, time, communication and resources. To begin a planning process, the following questions will be helpful:

- *Who should be involved on your planning team?*
- *Is the necessary commitment there for the plan?*
- *How will we involve absent or hard to reach stakeholders?*
- *How do the financial planning cycles of the various partners fit with the planning process?*
- *How long will it take?*
- *What information is needed and where can you get it?*

Plans have different complexity and take different forms depending on the breadth and complexity of issue(s) to be addressed. The general elements in a plan include:

- overall introduction, providing a description of the general nature of the plan and who is involved;
- a description of the context or environment as well as issues and challenges, stakeholder positions, etc.;
- articulation of the mission and values (principles) of the group;
- definition of objectives and goals – outline and describe concrete and desirable achievements to address the issue(s). Desired achievements can be organized into categories, such as social, environmental, financial, etc.;
- activities – specific actions to achieve objectives;
- timeline – linked to individual activities and completion of overall plan. When do you intend to complete actions/plan?
- resources – what time, money and human resources will be needed?
- monitoring and evaluation – how will you know when you are achieving the objectives of your plan?

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a process where groups and community leaders envision the future or desired state they hope to achieve and then develop and put in place the necessary procedures, operations and activities to achieve that future. Developing a strategic plan is useful in that it provides the framework for action.

- Create a statement of the group's common, practical vision for the future or project.
- Identify the environmental forces or context within which that vision will be achieved or those situations that could obstruct its realization.
- Set the strategic directions. These are projects, programs, and activities that address the challenges and allow the vision to become a reality.
- Design and prioritize systematic actions to implement the strategic directions.
- Establish a timeline for implementation of the actions identified in the previous step. Plan all the details needed to implement the plan.

Action Planning

Action planning focuses on the completion of a specific project or task and is therefore narrower in scope than strategic planning. Elements include:

- establishing objectives based on the needs and resources available.
- wording objectives as desired outcomes;
- establishing a timeframe for each activity or objective;
- identifying the resources needed and where they can be located;
- determining the person/group responsible at each stage of the action plan; and,
- identifying any barriers that might block you from reaching your goal and deciding in advance how you plan to deal with them.

Action Planning

Evaluation

Why?

Evaluation is an integral part of all group planning and activity as it provides a means of gathering information on how well the program is doing and how things might be improved. An evaluation tells you what is working and what is not and whether or not the program is achieving what was wanted. Based on evaluation, changes can be made to improve the program and its operations in the future.

In working collaboratively and with community, it is important to involve a broad range of participants in all phases of the evaluation process. The strategies for evaluation should be consistent with the values and objectives of your shared work.

Good evaluation depends on the purposes of the group being clear and complete. It is important that evaluation methods not focus overly on those aspects of a program that are easier to measure. For example, one of the most important purposes in collaborative efforts is to create equitable and participatory relationships and processes. This is the key – not the number of meetings, or the number of participants, the papers produced, or events, etc. Avoid focusing on the latter simply because these are easier to measure. Qualitative assessment is as important as quantifiable indicators.

How?

Refer to Interagency Projects: An Evaluation Guide,

Government of Saskatchewan, 1997. Copies can be obtained by writing to the ADMs' Forum on Human Services, c/o Saskatchewan Education, 2220 College Avenue, 7th floor, REGINA SK S4P 3V7

Balance Head, Heart and Feet

A different approach to assessing the effectiveness of long-term or short-term processes in working collaboratively is to check whether they have achieved a balance of "head, heart and feet." Working with community involves a balance of thinking, feeling and doing.

- **Thinking:** In order to make change, it is important for people, as individuals and in groups, to increase their knowledge and understanding of their communities and the external and internal forces acting on these communities.
- **Feeling:** This involves compassion, caring and respect for others. It includes concern about dignity and justice. This focus contributes to the creation of energy, motivation and inspiration in people.
- **Doing:** Doing is both the beginning and end of community work – initiating the processes of people coming together to solve problems and take action to resolve issues (adapted from Arnold et al, 1991).

Design Your Evaluation to be Useful

Use these criteria to help you frame evaluation questions that will provide useful answers:

- The primary intended users care about the answer to the question and want information to help answer it.
- The primary users want to answer the question for themselves, not have it answered by someone else or for someone else.
- There is more than one possible answer to any question. The answer should not be predetermined by the phrasing of the question.
- The intended users can indicate how they would use the answer to the question. They can specify the relevance of an answer to the question for future action (adapted from Patton, 1997).

Appendix A: Resources

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Appendix B:

Definition of Terms

Action Planning – Action planning is the development of a detailed and practical plan. Specific actions are planned, at specific times, and so on. Only those who are directly involved in carrying out the activity need be involved in planning the activity.

Capacity Building – Capacity Building is the development of self-reliance through community leadership and participation, and local resource development.

Community – A community is a group of people bound together through mutual interest and a sense of shared destiny. Community is often defined geographically, such as a town, rural area, or neighbourhood. Sometimes it is defined as a community of interest – such as the seniors' community or the arts community. Communities are self-defining. Important components include: a shared commitment to a vision, values, mutual interest, culture, identity or common good; interdependency; and personal relationships. Communities are dynamic systems, influenced by their own members, as well as by external events and other people.

Community Action – Community action includes actions that improve the capacity of the community to care for itself in a sustainable and democratic way.

Community Development – Community development is an educational and motivational process that engages and empowers people and communities to actively participate in guiding their social and economic affairs. It makes an intentional attempt to enhance community power and resources, and redress imbalances within and among communities, and between communities and human service agencies. Proactive attention to enhancing the community's role and participation. Building democracy in a very participatory and long-lasting way. There is an emphasis on ensuring the participation of those people who are members of groups too often left out of initiatives.

Conflict Resolution – Conflict of some form is inevitable in group work. Exposing and understanding an underlying problem can often respond to people's interests or needs, in a different way, with a solution that may be more satisfying and longer-term. Resolving conflict in a constructive way is important to building relationships and achieving goals together.

Consultation – Consultation is formal dialogue between an established organization (agency or department) and the public to achieve a common understanding of an issue or policy. It includes requests for feedback or public response to information on issues, policies or programs.

Consensus Building – Consensus does not necessarily mean that all parties agree, but that all can live with a decision for the sake of the group's ability to move forward. Consensus will almost always involve compromise and can release a group to move beyond individual wants to determining and pursuing shared needs.

Cooperation – Cooperation is a process of acting or working together to achieve a common purpose. Procedures, policies, and activities of cooperating agencies remain distinct and separate.

Energy Points – Areas or issues that people have strong feelings or passions about.

Equity – Equity recognizes the value of differences. It also recognizes that not everyone benefits equally from being offered the same opportunities. Equity is appealed to whenever a rule followed to the letter leads to unjust consequences. It provides for different treatment where the same treatment will provide unequal effects for members of disadvantaged groups.

Empowerment – Empowerment is strengthening the participation of an individual, group or community in decision making. It is centred around people's efforts to increase their participation – that is, their ability to act on issues of concern and their control over physical and social resources – within the development process.

Focus Group – Selected individuals (8-10) are invited to a relatively informal session to discuss the various aspects of a particular topic or question. A skilled facilitator conducts the session, usually beginning with a standard set of questions, but using prompting and probing to ensure that the topic is fully discussed and that all individuals contribute their views.

Human Services – Human services include education, health, social, justice, recreation, culture, housing and other services that are provided by community or government agencies that contribute to the well-being of children, families, and communities.

Inclusion – Inclusion is a concerted, proactive effort to ensure the participation of individuals and groups who have been without power or resources, i.e., women, Aboriginal peoples, people living in poverty, young adults.

Integration – Integration involves linking various service providers to provide a comprehensive range of supports 'seamlessly' addressing needs in the whole and contributing to well-being and success. Integrated services recognize that all facets of a community's well-being are interrelated – safety, nutrition, physical and mental health, etc.

Interagency Collaboration – Interagency collaboration includes interagency planning, coordinated and integrated service delivery. The process assists parties who see different aspects of a problem to constructively explore their differences, build on commonalities, and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible. Collaboration is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

Interagency Cooperation – Interagency cooperation is a process of working together informally to achieve the day-to-day goals of the organization. It represents a limited level agency interaction as agency procedures, policies, and activities remain distinct and separate and are determined without reference to the procedures and policies of the other agencies. Agencies are autonomous, function independently in parallel fashion and work toward the identified goals of their respective programs. It demonstrates a peaceful co-existence, but is neither genuinely interactive nor interdependent.

Needs Assessment – Needs assessment is a form of assessing the situation in a community. It is an analytical and reflective process that combines information and values. The following attributes of a community are assessed and analyzed: values, strengths and resources (including its members), and needs or gaps.

Network – A network is a web of free-standing participants cohering through shared interests and values.

Networking – Networking is building partnerships with other individuals and organizations or communities and permits the mobilization of resources to achieve common goals to share information. Networking is also people connecting with people, linking ideas and resources.

Participation – The people involved or affected by an issue or initiative have a share in the planning and the outcome with government.

Participatory Research – Participatory research shows respect for the abilities of community members by including them as partners in the public policy, research and decision making processes. Unlike classical research, participatory research goes beyond data gathering and involves people in the process. Participatory research goes beyond problem solving to problem posing. It seeks to understand the social, political and social-psychological conditions underlying a problem and to resolve the problem by transforming those conditions. Participatory research can lead to highly creative solutions, programs and policies.

Partnerships – Partnerships are built on relationships of trust and respect, over a period of time. Partnership means a shared commitment to pursue agreed-upon goals jointly and in a coordinated manner. Joint planning and shared decision making are characteristics of effective partnerships. In an institutional context, partnerships are systems of formalized cooperation, in legally binding working relationships, and mutually adopted plans among a number of institutions. They involve agreements on policy and program objectives and the sharing of responsibility, resources, risks, and benefits over a specified period of time.

Policy – Policy is a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions. A policy is a set of strategies designed to achieve a desired state of affairs (specific objectives). It is a concrete expression of values, which involves the distribution of resources and power. A policy has three key components: objectives, strategies, and outcomes.

Public Involvement – Public involvement refers to activities and efforts human service agencies make to involve community members in dialogue or consultation or by working with community organizations or individuals at different levels. It can be a cooperative, inclusive process where human service providers and agencies engage people and communities in meaningful ways in identifying needs and analyzing problems, determining solutions from a variety of options, planning for the future, delivering services, and evaluating progress.

Strategic Planning – The development of a plan at a purpose-oriented and broad level in coherent components or programs, each of which is linked to the purposes of the group. All partners should be involved. The plan should be well thought out and linked to objectives and resources.

Task Force – A task force is a committee with a limited time frame and specific focus, i.e., to develop a recommendation. Once the task is completed, the committee is dissolved. May bring in members from outside the group.

Visioning – Visioning is a process that matches needs with resources. People should periodically revisit this vision together to check and to inspire themselves. They should ask themselves: Where do we want to be?

